

NOTES ON SOME NEVADA BIRDS

NED K. JOHNSON

University of Nevada Museum of Biology
Reno, Nevada

Distributional knowledge of the avifauna from areas comparatively little known ornithologically, such as are present in many parts of Nevada, benefits both from accumulation of data concerning common, familiar species as well as from supplementary records of uncommon and rare forms. Linsdale's studies (Pac. Coast Avif. No. 23, 1936 and *Condor*, 53, 1951:228-249) establish a basis for evaluation of records over the state. "The Birds of Lahontan Valley, Nevada" (*Condor*, 48, 1946:129-138) by Alcorn provides perhaps the best available summary of intensive field work in one definite area of northern Nevada. Many other papers concerning distributional and seasonal records of Nevada birds have appeared recently in the *Condor*. However, much more field work must be done before the status of the majority of Nevada birds, with reference to abundance and range, can be accurately postulated.

The following notes would seem of value since they pertain to birds uncommonly recorded from Nevada, and to regularly present species where additional comments are pertinent to better clarify their status. Specimens mentioned are preserved in the University of Nevada Museum of Biology collections.

Melanitta deglandi. White-winged Scoter. Three specimens taken in Churchill County by Alcorn in November, 1940 and 1941 appear to be the only records of this duck in Nevada. The following notes are also from Churchill County. On October 22, 1949, W. V. Woodbury examined a juvenile, presumably dead from botulism, at the Nutgrass Area in the Stillwater Wildlife Management Area, eighteen miles east-northeast of Fallon. One was shot by a hunter there on November 4, 1951. Another individual was shot by a hunter (Mr. Ted Sherman) near Hazen on October 28, 1951. The heads, wings, and feet of these two birds, both in juvenile plumage, were preserved for identification.

Falco columbarius. Pigeon Hawk. A specimen was taken on March 16, 1952, at Reno. An English Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

was clutched in the talons of the hawk when collected. The crop contained another English Sparrow, while the stomach was gorged with two small, unidentified Passerines.

Charadrius hiaticula semipalmatus. Semipalmated Plover. I have a fall record in addition to Marshall's (*Condor*, 53, 1951:157). Two birds in juvenile plumage were collected from a group of five seen at Little Washoe Lake, Washoe County, September 3, 1950.

Numenius americanus. Long-billed Curlew. Recorded each spring and summer in the southwestern Truckee Meadows in which Reno is situated. Extreme dates are April 1 and August 31, with July records absent. No more than eight individuals have been noted in one day. Individuals observed May 19, 1951, showed nesting activity, but no eggs or young were seen. This is the first report of the species from Washoe County.

Totanus melanoleucus. Greater Yellow-legs. To my knowledge no records of this wader are available from Washoe County. In the vicinity of the Nevada Game Farm, Truckee Meadows, small numbers are present each spring. Records are from April 8 to the middle of May. On September 3, 1950, one was noted at Little Washoe Lake. A specimen was taken there September 14, 1951.

Totanus flavipes. Lesser Yellow-legs. A scarce migrant in Nevada represented by two specimens from Elko County, three specimens from Churchill County and a sight record from Clark County. On April 19, 1952, the writer collected two specimens from a group of three birds at the northwest edge of Carson Lake, 12 miles south-southeast of Fallon, Churchill County.

Erolia alpina pacifica. Red-backed Sandpiper. Linsdale lists four records from the state. V. K. Johnson and I recognized a single bird in the Truckee Meadows four miles southeast of Reno on May 8, 1948.

Limnodromus scolopaceus. Long-billed Dowitcher. From near the Nevada Game Farm, Truckee Meadows, I have the following sight records: two birds on March 27, 1949; twelve on May 15, 1949, and twenty-one on April 16, 1951. A flock of fifteen was present at Little Washoe Lake on April 18, 1948, and three were seen there on September 3, 1950. On the following day a specimen

was taken. These are the first records from Washoe County.

Ereunetes mauri. Western Sandpiper. Eight individuals were observed at close range on March 26, 1951, at a playa lake 4 miles east of Chiatovich Ranch (Arlemont) in Fish Lake Valley, Esmeralda County. This is a new record for this shorebird in Esmeralda County as well as an early date for the presence of the species for the spring migration in Nevada.

Tyto alba. Barn Owl. Two secondary wing feathers and several pellets of an owl were found in a narrow cave near the bottom of Devil's Hole National Monument, (about ten miles northeast of Death Valley Junction, California). Ash Meadows, Nye County, on April 10, 1950. The feathers are unquestionably those of the Barn Owl, indicating the first known occurrence of this bird in Nye County. On June 25, 1951, another visit was made to the locality. A single Barn Owl flew from the crevice as I approached, and although no nest was located in the area, a sack of pellets was gathered from the ground at the bottom of the hole.

Dendrocopos albolarvatus. White-headed Woodpecker. This woodpecker is an uncommon resident in the Sierra Nevada along the western border of the state. No reports are apparently available from Nevada since 1889, when Keeler took a specimen at Glenbrook, Lake Tahoe, Douglas County, May 28. Therefore it seems profitable to put on record the following recent observations. An individual was observed at Incline, Lake Tahoe, Washoe County on May 8, 1949. After a snowstorm in the Sierras a single bird, apparently a female, was present in the Truckee Meadows area at Reno, 4500 feet, on October 24, 1950. What was probably the same individual appeared in Reno on November 24, 1950, and again on January 11, 1951.

Thryomanes bewickii. Bewick Wren. The race *atrestus* of western Nevada has been discussed by Miller (*Condor*, 43:250-251). Linsdale (1951:240) lists *atrestus* only from Lyon and Churchill Counties, although Miller reports a specimen from the Truckee Canyon, thirty miles east of Reno. This specimen represents Washoe County. Alcorn (1946:135) records the species as "not abundant" in Lahontan Valley. In the Truckee River canyon from Wadsworth to Verdi, along Hunter Creek to 6000 feet in the Carson Range six miles southwest of Reno, and in the Reno area, all in Washoe County,

I have found this species one of the commonest residents. It seems very much restricted to the tangles of Wild Rose(*Rosa*), and Willow (*Salix*) near water, and among the exposed roots of trees along banks where debris has accumulated from high water. My notes of this wren are most abundant through the period from December to June. One was taken along the Truckee River sixteen miles east of Reno on February 4, 1951.

Bombycilla garrulus. Greater Waxwing. I have an additional record of this rare winter visitant, two birds seen on the University of Nevada campus in Reno, Washoe County on January 27, 1952. The pair flew from their perches in a willow tree to forage on a boggy layer of matted cattails (*Typha*) at the edge of a pond.

Bombycilla cedrorum. Cedar Waxwing. The seasonal status of this species in Nevada will probably never be more definite than "irregular visitant." Linsdale has several May, June, and September records representing widely scattered localities over the state, except the western region. Alcorn's Churchill County notes report this species as "seen most frequently in September, October, November, and December. Less often recorded in January, May, and June." In the Truckee Meadows area, Washoe County, I have observed flocks of Cedar Waxwings, in numbers of from a few to about forty individuals, on twenty-four separate days representing eight different months in the last five years. I have recorded this waxwing consistently through the years only in the month of October. However, I have observed it most common in March and April, contrary to Alcorn's observations. Also, I have two observations for February, but lack records for November and December. It may be said that this species is to be expected in Nevada at any time except the period between early June and the middle of September.

Amphispiza bilineata. Black-throated Sparrow. A female in breeding condition was taken at Ash Meadows, Nye County, on April 5, 1950. Two days later an individual was seen near Warm Springs, four miles northwest of Glendale, Clark County. These records are early spring dates for this sparrow in Nevada, as Linsdale gives April 20 as the earliest date. However, on March 20, 1939, several were seen on the Nevada shore of the Colorado River at Willow Beach (Grater, MS.). These birds were perhaps migrants.